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CINCPAC FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR, J51 (LCDR FLETCHER),
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TAGS: KMDR OIIP OPRC KPAO PREL ETRD PTER ASEC BG OCII

SUBJECT: Media Reaction: Israeli Withdrawal From Gaza; Dhaka

Summary: Newspaper editorials term the Gaza withdrawal a move in the right direction. They say that Israel needs to focus now on the West Bank and Jerusalem issues.

Israeli Withdrawal From Gaza

"Israel leaves Gaza"
Independent English language newspaper "New Age" editorially comments (8/19):

Part of the reason why Mr. Sharon has decided to leave Gaza stems from his realization that holding on to the territory does not really solve his country's security problems. In the past few years, the activities of Palestinian extremists such as Hamas have more or less convinced people all around that sooner or later the Israeli authorities would need to look inwards about whether or not they need Gaza as part of the bigger Israel they have in mind. It is now obvious that the prime minister has accepted fully the thought that Israel without Gaza will be a better proposition than with it. In the process, though, Mr. Sharon has had to confront a rebellion within his own cabinet where extreme rightwing ministers opted to go out of office rather than go along with him. On top of everything, it was the finance minister (and former prime minister) Binyamin Netanyahu who made a public show of disagreeing with Sharon, eventually making his way out of government. In his turn, the prime minister made a shrewd, well-calculated move of inviting the opposition Labor into a power-sharing arrangement with his Likud party. The result has been a healthy accommodation between Mr. Sharon and Mr. Shimon Peres, the veteran politician now known for his contribution to the peace process with the Palestinians. Together the prime minister and Mr. Peres, now the deputy prime minister, have quietly but insistently been implementing the Gaza withdrawal plan in its entirety. The alacrity with which the settlements have been and are being emptied of even the most rabid of Jews is a sign of the seriousness the government in Tel Aviv has attached to the issue.

But while the Gaza withdrawal is surely a move in the right direction, there is the general feeling that Israel needs to come up with a lot more in its search not only for accommodation with its Palestinian neighbors but also for its own security. It is the West Bank which should now be the focus in any peace consideration. With issues like the status of Jerusalem remaining in an imbroglio, it is but natural for people to feel that Mr. Sharon and his friends must come up with a lot more than they are willing to offer. A few crumbs here and there will not satisfy the Palestinians, for crumbs are not the ingredients that go into the making of a state.

"After Gaza, the West Bank?"
Pro-left English language weekly "Holiday" editorially comments (8/21):

The withdrawal from Gaza...is welcome. But that does not mean that it solves all problems for either Israel or the Palestinians. There is still the matter of what the Israelis plan to do about the West Bank and the future status of Jerusalem. The Israeli government has lately demonstrated what it thinks is its agreement to live with a Palestinian state beside it. But the way in which it has gone about promoting the idea has only convinced men like President Mahmoud Abbas that it expects a Palestine to be established on the crumbs of territory it has on offer. Obviously, such an attitude can only exacerbate the issues. Which is why it is important tha